

## Dean's Annual Report on the State of the College – 2009

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*“America’s success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be predicated upon greater access to higher education for its citizens, greater investment in research and discovery, improved understanding of our diverse cultures and common heritage, and a firm grasp of our role on the world stage.”*

*From an Open Letter from the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences to the Next President and Congress of the United States (September 2008).*

Greetings! I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your contributions to the success of the College this past academic year. It has been a year filled with tremendous challenges and dramatic changes, a year in which we continue to exceed all expectations in spite of these obstacles. And I am completely clear on the fact that every bit of this success is the result of your efforts in the classroom, laboratory, and community.

Keep in mind that the fate of our College is closely tied to the identity of our university, which is itself still in play. After decades of regularly shifting priorities, I have been delighted to see a constancy of focus on the latest Strategic Plan, whose stated priorities align perfectly with what CAS can provide. I continue to take every opportunity to advocate for the importance of the liberal arts and sciences to any great research university, and to implore my administrative colleagues to resist the lure of a singular focus on science, medicine, and technology. As we put forward our application for a Phi Beta Kappa Chapter, and as we kick off our Capital Campaign, you will see evidence of this balanced approach in all of our communications.

That said, there is no denying that the scientists among us have embraced a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to craft a truly innovative and interdisciplinary School structure in our new School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. Recognizing that our faculty numbers fall far short of what our competitors would see as “critical mass,” these proactive Chairs set out to re-imagine the Sciences at USF in the form of Research Clusters. If you have not already seen their work, you can get a taste of what is happening at their School website: <http://sciences.cas.usf.edu/>

This work combined with other innovations in the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences culminated in a banner year for faculty hiring (34 positions), something that few universities can report! The applicant pools were so exceptional that I predict we will one day look back on this year as transformative for the College. Please join me in welcoming our newest colleagues to USF in the Fall.

In addition to the creation of the School structure, we were also most fortunate to bring some other exceptional departments and programs into the College. We welcome the Department of Economics and their excellent faculty to CAS, along with the innovative and accomplished members of the Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean (ISLAC) and the Institute on Black Life (IBL, now a part of Africana Studies). We are also working hard to establish a coordinated approach to world languages and cultures through the work of the federally funded Center for the Study of International Languages

and Cultures (CSILC), which we hope to help coordinate global research and teaching activities across the College.

As you all know, CAS is by far the largest college at USF, with 15,000 majors and 500 faculty. 95% of USF undergraduates take at least one class in our College. Our undergraduate enrollment is up this year, but unlike years past we should not plan on much more growth—the administration is seeking to limit the size of the undergraduate population going forward and to focus instead on increasing quality. Incoming freshman GPAs and SAT scores are both up, and there is a growing focus on identifying students who may qualify for national awards and giving them support to achieve them.

Our graduate enrollment is down slightly this year, as it is nationally. In the future, we will be investing in increasing graduate enrollments (which we understand are tied to the number and size of GA stipends) to achieve a grad/undergrad enrollment ratio that reflects a more typical AAU university. Our long-awaited linked PhD programs in History, Sociology, and GIA will debut this Fall and will help us greatly in making this shift.

Despite all this turmoil and uncertainty, you have stayed focused on your commitment to your research. I am delighted to report that funded research is up significantly in CAS this year (nearly \$30 million as of this report), and we will likely see even greater gains when we add in funding from the federal stimulus package.

A College is only as good as its faculty and staff, and so it is with a bittersweet mixture of congratulations and regret that we say goodbye to our most recent retirees: Cathy D’Azzo, Peter George, Larry Leslie, David Schenck, Karen Schrader and Dick Wunderlin. We wish you every happiness in the next phase of your journey.

As I look to the year ahead, my crystal ball is fuzzy at best. I promise to remain optimistic and continue to do everything I can to build our collective dream of a truly exceptional research university anchored by a superb College of Arts and Sciences. In the meantime, we will all be challenged to think creatively about how to move forward in a regressive political climate that does not invest sufficiently in education. The days of adequately staffed, generously funded universities are gone, at least for now, and we will likely be forced to make tough choices about where we invest our scarce resources. None of us looks forward to such conversations, but some good can come of them. They can remind us of what we care about most deeply; and they can prompt us to imagine truly new ways of organizing our efforts that still achieve our goals but do so in a way that is dramatically different from how we are used to seeing it done. Throughout the process, keep in mind that the best contribution you can make is to reaffirm your commitment to your scholarship and to our students. Everything else is extra.

To get more detail on any of the items in this report, you can download my address to the Spring ’09 CAS faculty assembly, which can be found on our website: <http://web1.cas.usf.edu/MAIN/>

- Eric Eisenberg, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences